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In a Fortnight

By Peter Mattis

CENTRAL PARTY SCHOOL'S CRITIQUES SUGGEST NEW LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS

Political reform in China since Deng Xiaoping's "Southern Tour" in 1992 has seemed a distant if always tempting narrative for analysts and observers. The cycles of foreign hope and disappointment with Chinese leadership attest to this. The most recent stirrings of political reform discussion may be keeping within strict boundaries that do not challenge the CCP's right to rule, but recent articles in the official Chinese media suggest this discussion is more than mere rhetoric—or, at least, has political implications for the 18th Party Congress ("Storming the Castle of the Status Quo," *China Brief*, April 26). Two contradictory commentaries on anti-corruption—one calling for "acceptable levels" while the other arguing for zero-tolerance—at the end of May suggested growing divides in the leadership over what political reform should accomplish (*China Youth Daily*, May 31; *Global Times*, May 29). The *China Youth Daily* made the more telling point, which seemingly undermines established dogma of socialism with Chinese characteristics: economic development will not resolve the corruption problem, only structural reform can do so. Two recent Central Party School articles suggest these contradictory currents are part of a wider political debate with more significance than diverging propaganda lines.

An article in the latest issue of the school's journal, *Red Flag*, posed the question of whether Deng Xiaoping would approve of structural political reform. The answer, unsurprisingly, was "no," at least as Westerners understand it. The CCP's rule "suits China's national conditions and is in accord with the fundamental interests of the people" (*Red Flag*, June 12). Structural political reform—if it did not include removing the CCP from power or implementing anarchy-causing, Western-style democracy—however, could be understood as China's adaptation to the structural changes in society as well as dealing with the problems of bureaucracy, excessive concentration of power, corruption and local officials carving out exploitative fiefdoms. Combined with an attack on those who would walk away from the CCP's leadership, the article seemed to be critical of those who supported the ousted Chongqing Secretary Bo Xilai and other counter-reformers.

Another Central Party School publication, the *Study Times*, more directly criticized Zhou Yongkang—now believed to be one of Bo's supporters. The article "Who Will Manage Social Management" (*shehui guanli shei lai guan*) critiqued the Political-Legal Committee system, which Zhou heads, for having contradictions between its actions and its policies, suggesting its power should be diffused. The contradictions stemmed from the Political-Legal Committee ostensibly trying to claim authority over spheres already governed by other CCP and state organs, confusing the situation (*Study Times*, June 18). Ultimately, the article seems to imply Zhou's position should be downgraded from the Political Standing Committee to subordinate the coercive aspects of preserving stability and social management to the larger concerns of CCP governance.

While easy to dismiss these articles as mere reform rhetoric, observers should note Vice President Xi Jinping—the forerunner to succeed President Hu Jintao—is also the president of the Central Party School. Hu and Xi have long been seen as on opposite sides of a leadership split between Hu's China Youth League (*tuanpai*) faction and the princeling faction, composed of the offspring of CCP elite, but this notion may now be outdated. Ideology and the vision for the state may now be the prime division over the struggle for power ("The Politics and Policy of Leadership Succession," *China Brief*, January 20). As China correspondent John Garnaut elaborated this spring in *Foreign Policy*, Hu, Xi and their immediate protégés share a common political lineage to the reformer Hu Yaobang, whose funeral sparked the political upheaval in 1989 (March 29).

The potential for this reform debate to divide the top leadership—which many inside and outside the CCP assume could be socially destabilizing—makes the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) willingness to guarantee political power a paramount consideration as the party steps into a debate about structural political reform. The repeated calls for PLA loyalty—the latest coming this week—probably should be read in this light (*PLA Daily*, June 17). These calls almost certainly do not mean that PLA officers are calling for "the separation of the military from politics, depoliticize the military or 'nationalization' of the PLA," leaving the CCP undefended (*PLA Daily*, March 19; *China Daily*, March 13). The annual arrival of new PLA soldiers in their billets during the spring months account for some of these calls, because new soldiers need to be indoctrinated, but political scandal and struggle may account for others ("Politics and the PLA: Securing Social Stability," *China Brief*, March 30). The PLA and the People's Armed Police, however, are the guarantors of CCP power and this year's 18th Party Congress will witness a remarkable leadership transition. The CCP fears hostile forces will make "more subtle ideological penetration efforts" and expand infiltration efforts to sabotage social stability to disrupt this transition (*PLA Daily*, June 17). As the leadership grapples with the delicate question of structural reform and generational change, the loyalty calls suggest the CCP sees this debate as vital but potentially destabilizing and the PLA should not let real or potential political divisions change its basic relationship with the party.

True systemic political reform may not be in China's near future; however, the discussion inside China suggests the status quo is increasingly unacceptable to China's leaders. Structural political reform may remain elusive, but the CCP appears to be engaged in a serious debate about the future of China—serious enough that Beijing is concerned leadership splits may emerge that would damage Chinese stability. Without a loyal PLA, the party leadership may not have the confidence to continue their discussion, leading once again to political stagnation. The Central Party School attacks could indicate a new alignment between Hu and Xi, disrupting conventional

wisdom about factional divides. Although uncertain, this possible realignment would have profound implications for the makeup of the next Politburo Standing Committee and the prospects of even limited CCP-centric reforms.

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China Deploys Pugilistic Foreign Policy with New Vigor

By Willy Lam

Daunting challenges call for extraordinary responses. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) administration has found itself on the defensive particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. China's sovereignty spats in the South China Sea with several Southeast Asian states came to a head in a prolonged naval standoff with the Philippines over the Scarborough Shoal (also known as the Huangyan islet). Tension with Vietnam—another disputant to China's claims over South China Sea islands—also remains high. Japan and India, both of which also have territorial rows with China, have boosted military ties with the Philippines and Vietnam. Moreover, U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announced at the annual Shangri-La Security Dialogue in Singapore in early June that the Pentagon would by 2020 base as much as 60 percent of its naval capacity—including six aircraft carrier battle groups—in the Asia-Pacific theater (Associated Press, June 1; Reuters, June 1). This seemed to be a substantiation of the Asian "pivot" that President Barack Obama unveiled with much fanfare early this year. These developments have apparently prompted Beijing's foreign policy establishment to exacerbate the aggressive tactics in the diplomatic and security arenas that it first started last year ("Beijing Adopts Multi-Pronged Approach to Parry Washington's Challenge," *China Brief*, November 30, 2011).

In theory, senior party and government cadres have not abandoned late patriarch Deng Xiaoping's famous foreign-policy dictum of the early 1990s: "Take a low profile and never take the lead." A rising number of influential academic and military advisers to Beijing have argued that due to China's fast-rising quasi-superpower status—and the intensification of the country's competition with the United States and its Asian allies—the "low profile" approach has become all but obsolete. According to widely-published defense theorist Yang Yi, "it is no longer possible for China to keep a low profile." "When any country infringes upon our nation's security and interests, we must stage a resolute self-defense," Rear Admiral Yang told Xinhua News Agency in an interview. "Counter-attack measures [taken by Beijing] should be 'of short duration, low cost and efficient' – and leave no room for ambiguity or [undesirable] after-effects" (Xinhua, December 26, 2011; Southern Daily [Guangzhou], December 26, 2011). The usually hawkish *Global Times*, which is a subsidiary of the *People's Daily*, said it all when it editorialized that for China to safeguard its national interests, "we must dare to defend our principles and have the courage to confront multiple countries simultaneously" (*Global Times*, May 11; *Ming Pao* [Hong Kong], May 11).

Indeed, Beijing's immediate reaction to the Panetta statement was hardly in congruence with Deng's "take a low profile" mantra. The head of the Chinese delegation to the Shangri-La Dialogue, Lieutenant General Ren Haiquan, took a tough line in response to the Pentagon's plans to boost its naval presence in Asia. "We take the worst-case scenarios into consideration," said Ren, who is Deputy Commandant of the Academy of Military Science. Ren added "Once Chinese interests are hurt, our retaliatory measures will be terrifying" (Chinamil.com.cn, June 3; China News Service, June 3). At the same time, a number of military commentators in the official Chinese media have made thinly veiled threats about using military means to settle diplomatic flaps. Major General Luo Yuan, a popular media commentator, has reiterated the People's Liberation Army's readiness to "teach the Philippines a lesson." Luo blamed nationalistic elements inside and outside the Philippine government for inflaming relations with China. "If the Philippines cannot rein in their folks, let us discipline them," he wrote last month. Regarding the alleged provocations of the Philippine navy, Luo warned "We have repeatedly adopted a forbearing attitude—and we have reached the limits of tolerance. There is no more need to show further tolerance" (*Global Times*, May 23; Sina.com, May 23).

Emblematic of the more assertive stance taken by Beijing is the so-called foreign policy of core national interests—and, by extension, the red line diplomacy. Put simply, this means Beijing wants to draw "red lines" around geographical locations deemed integral to the country's "core national interests." If a foreign power is perceived as having encroached upon these red lines, Beijing reserves the right to retaliate through military and other tough tactics. Traditionally, Beijing's "core national interests" merely referred to issues of national unity and territorial integrity—for example, Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang must never be allowed to secede from the motherland. Alarm bells were sounded in Washington and several Asian capitals in March 2010 when two senior U.S. officials were told by Chinese cadres that Beijing regarded the South China Sea as falling within the country's "core national interests." (See "Hawks vs. Doves: Beijing Debates 'Core Interests' and Sino-U.S. Relations," *China Brief*, August 19, 2010). In an official statement a few months later, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang apparently tried to cool things down by refraining from naming specific places when he gave the official definition of China's core interests. He said "Areas relating to national sovereignty, security, territorial integrity and developmental interests all belong to China's core interests" (*Global Times*, July 13, 2010; China News Service, July 13, 2010). Given that China's "developmental interests" may include reliable supplies of oil and gas as well as strategic minerals, Qin's definition could be interpreted to encompass islets in the South China Sea that are supposedly rich in hydrocarbons.

In the wake of the on-going crisis with Manila—and Panetta's dramatic announcement—Chinese theorists have been pushing the red line policy with more gusto than ever. *People's Daily* commentator Ding Gang cited the South China Sea as a vital part of China's core national interests. "We have to draw a set of lines [in the South China Sea] for the United States so as to alert the Americans regarding what it can do and what it cannot," wrote Ding in the party mouthpiece, "The Americans should also be made to be aware of its hegemonic tendencies. This is not only necessary but also beneficial to the Americans" (*People's Daily*, June 2; *Global Times*, June 2). Senior cadres also have made more overt references to the disputed Diaoyu archipelago (also known as the Senkakus) in the East China Sea as part and parcel of China's core interests. While meeting Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda in Beijing last month, Premier Wen Jiabao apparently complained about Tokyo's stance on the Diaoyu islands as well as the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. The official media quoted Wen as urging Noda to "respect China's core interests and major concerns" (China News Service, May 15; *Yomiuri Shimbun*, May 15).

The red line diplomacy also includes penalizing a variety of countries whose leaders have either met with the Dalai Lama or allowed meetings of the World Uighur Congress, which supports some form of Xinjiang independence, to take place in their countries. Beijing has halted a series of high-level exchanges with the United Kingdom after Prime Minister David Cameron held a "private meeting" with the Dalai Lama at Saint Paul's Church in London last month (*Ming Pao*, June 14; Xinhua, June 13). This was reminiscent of the "punishments" that Beijing had inflicted on countries including Germany, France and the United States after their leaders had met with the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader. In almost all cases, however, Beijing has "normalized" relations with countries penalized due to the Dalai Lama factor after a decent interval—at most, several months.

Equally controversial has been Beijing's increasingly frequent deployment of economic weapons to resolve diplomatic differences. During the on-going territorial confrontation with Manila, Beijing has curtailed the importation of Philippine fruit and agricultural produce. It also has called upon Chinese tour groups to stop visiting the Philippines (*Philippine Star* [Manila] May 20; *The Australian*, May 17). This extraordinary gesture was a further development of the CCP administration's controversial "rare earth" strategy, which was used to put pressure on Tokyo in late 2010 after the captain of a Chinese fishing junk was detained by Japanese coast guard in the vicinity of the Diaoyu-Senkaku Islands. Beijing also cut the number of Chinese tourists visiting Japan. Earlier this year, Japan, the United States and a number of other countries filed a complaint in the World Trade Organization (WTO) accusing Beijing of using artificial fiats to cut down on the export of rare earth minerals, which are an important component of a variety of high-tech products. The WTO is pressing ahead with investigations despite Beijing's vehement denial (Xinhua, March 13; Bloomberg News, March 12).

Until recently, Beijing had cautioned against "mixing economics and politics" in China's relations with foreign countries. At the height of the anti-Japanese riots in 2005, nationalistic Chinese demonstrators called for a boycott of Japanese products. The firebrands also asked the Ministry of Railways not to import Japanese bullet-train technology. Then-Minister of Commerce Bo Xilai, however, admonished the nationalists to separate economic from political and diplomatic issues. Bo indicated, in this globalized economy, boycotting Japanese products would end up hurting China. He argued "Boycotting products [of another country] will be detrimental to the interests of the producers and consumers of both countries...This will hurt our cooperation and [economic] development with other countries." The minister added "we will protect the legal interests of all foreign companies in China, including those of Japanese enterprises" (Xinhua, April 22, 2005; China News Service, April 22, 2005). Going further back, when Beijing had to make annual applications to the U.S. government for "most favored nation status" in the 1990s, Chinese officials invariably asked members of Congress who criticized the nation's human rights records "to separate politics from economics" (Ifeng.com, November 25, 2010; Sina.com, February 23, 2010; Sohu.com, December 24, 2002).

Other instances of Beijing's controversial use of economic power to score diplomatic points are seen in its long-standing financial ties to rogue states, including those that are the targets of UN-mandated economic sanctions. Beijing not only provides economic aid to North Korea, but also trades with the Stalinist regime in contravention of the UN embargo (The Telegraph [London], June 8; Reuters, May 17). The CCP also maintains close investment and trading ties with Iran. Bilateral trade was worth $29.3 billion last year, up more than tenfold from a decade ago. Beijing also has been criticized for taking advantage of the withdrawal of Western oil companies from Iran to acquire oilfields and related resources there at good prices (*South China Morning Post*, June 17).

It seems evident that Beijing's bare-knuckled diplomacy has borne fruit in individual cases. For example, the "rare earth" strategy apparently played some role in Tokyo's decision to release the captain caught in East China Sea in late 2010. Additionally, Manila has become less vociferous in its attacks on Beijing's South China Sea policies in the wake of China's economic pressure. Overall, Beijing's adoption of hawkish and controversial tactics has hurt China's global image—and its ability to win friends on its periphery.

This concern seems to be behind an article in the *Global Times* last week entitled "Why Has China's Global Environment Become More Severe?" In this thought-provoking piece, Wang Jisi, a respected international relations expert at Peking University, argued that "while the global balance of powers has demonstrated the trend of 'the East rising and the West declining', China's international situation has not improved." Among the numerous domestic and foreign factors that Wang analyzed were Chinese neighbors' reactions to the country's more assertive power projection. "In the course of China's boosting its national defense capability, its neighbors and the U.S. not only cast doubt on [Beijing's] peaceful-development intentions but they also strengthen defensive measures that target China, in addition to coordinating their China-related strategies," Wang wrote, "All these have put bigger pressure on China's national security (*Global Times*, June 13). An equally pertinent point, of course, is whether China's global status—and its sense of diplomatic security—may not have been enhanced if it had refrained from using foreign policy tactics that are deemed to run counter to well-established international norms. The CCP leadership may want to think twice before abandoning both the letter and the spirit of Deng's "lie low" stratagem, which signaled in an unequivocal manner the Middle Kingdom's commitment to global diplomatic conventions.

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Su Tseng-Chang and the Future of the DPP

By L.C. Russell Hsiao and H.H. Michael Hsiao

After the loss of the January 2012 presidential election, the opposition-Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in Taiwan had been searching for a new chairperson to lead the party. Since its defeat, the DPP's presidential candidate, Dr. Tsai Ing-Wen, a noted academic and former chairman of the Executive Yuan's Mainland Affairs Council, stepped down as party chairwoman. Tsai's decision to remove herself from the race for the party's top leadership position—in spite of party supporters urging her to stay on to continue leading the party—left a vacuum in the top political leadership of the main opposition political party and sparked some concerns about the future direction of the party (*Taipei Times*, February 12).

For the past four months, the party's top brass and supporters within think tanks and academia have debated the reasons for the DPP's defeat and a new way forward. During the month of May and in the lead up to the chairperson election that was held on May 27th, the DPP organized a series of three televised debates between the contenders for chairman (Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chu served as the caretaker for the last two months): former Premier Su Tseng-Chang, former Tainan County Magistrate Su Huan-Chih, former Vice Premier Wu Rong-I, former Legislative Yuan member Chai Trong-Rong and former Party Chairman Hsu Hsin-Liang. The debates brought to light some differences concerning policies and approaches to China, but the overarching theme was the need for party unity and the underlying question of who should lead the DPP toward the 2016 presidential election (*Taipei Times*, April 17).

On May 27th, with a record-high turnout of 68.62 percent eligible party member votes cast, the party's electorate passed the chairperson baton to Su Tseng-Chang with a majority 50.47 percent of votes (*Taipei Times*, May 28). Su, who netted twice as votes as the closest runner up, has been interpreted by many observers as a clear mandate for him to lead the party. While Su received a clear majority among the five contenders in the race, it behooves observers to know that the other candidates also represent relevant power blocs within the DPP's electorate. Given the overwhelming focus on the need to promote party unity in the chairperson election, Su's number one priority will be to bring together the different views represented in the DPP to improve party unity and manage the way forward to elections in 2014 and 2016.

A profile of the contenders and policy positions presented in the debates during this race for the chairperson position therefore could provide insights into the orientation and future direction of the party. The role of the chairperson should not be understated. As cross-Strait policymaking becomes more diffused, the position of the DPP will have important implications for the future direction of the cross-Strait relations over the next four years [1].

2008 Redux?

The DPP's 2012 defeat in the presidential election marked the second consecutive loss following the party's landslide defeat in the 2008 presidential and legislative elections. Back in 2008, a sense of urgency filled the ranks and files of the DPP as supporters worried if it would ever be able to climb up from its crushing defeat to Ma Ying-jeou. The prevailing sense of pessimism at the time may be attributed in part to the fact that the party's top brass (euphemistically referred to as the four kings and one queen) were all at the frontline for the 2008 election and, after the DPP's defeat, there were no clear leaders ready to take over the party after Frank Hsieh's bruising defeat.

In 2008, Frank Hsieh—whom with the other three DPP contenders, Su Tseng-Chang, Vice President Annette Lu and Yu Shyi-Kun were hailed as the three kings and one queen of the party (for their role in the Party's establishment and down a king without Chen Shui-Bian)—was the DPP's favorite to take on Ma. Yet, the pessimism that followed losing the 2008 election stood in stark contrast to the party's reaction to the result of the 2012 presidential election. While many held hopes that Tsai could pull off an upset (indeed, some polls suggested she could), Tsai's defeat did not engender the same pessimistic reaction within the party after the 2008 presidential election. A lot has changed between 2008 and 2012, suggesting a newfound maturity and confidence within the party. Moreover, this change in attitude may be due in part because the DPP did a lot better than many people expected following the 2008 loss.

Who Were the 2012 Candidates?

Su Huan-Chih (born 1956): With 21.02 percent of the votes, Su Huan-Chih's silver medal performance surprised some observers. The relative newcomer and former Tainan County commissioner was the first candidate to register for the DPP chairperson election (*Taipei Times*, April 10). Su made "generational change" the theme of his campaign, and came in second to Su Tseng-chang by a smaller-than-expected margin. During the campaign, Su Huan-Chih argued he was the best candidate for the position because he is not affiliated with any faction and he has pledged not to run in future elections—implying that he does not plan to use the chairmanship to become the presidential nominee (*Taipei Times*, April 17). On China, Su Huan-chih believes the party already has a complete mechanism and policies for cross-Strait issues and there is no need for change.

Wu Rong-I (born 1939): The former vice premier who has only been in the party for nearly one year came in a respectable third with 14.73 percent. Wu said during the campaign that the DPP's resolution on Taiwan's future clearly states the party's position. The resolution defines Taiwan as a sovereign country separate from the People's Republic of China, while acknowledging the Republic of China (ROC) as the country's formal title. According to party insiders, the resolution, passed in 1999, still represents the DPP's basic position toward cross-Strait relations. "Taiwan is already sovereign and independent," Wu said, "There is no such issue as a 'declaration of independence'." Wu is currently the Chairman of Taiwan Brain Trust, a think tank established by independence stalwart Koo Kwang-Ming. He is also a board member of Taiwan Thinktank and Senior Adviser of Taiwan Institute of Economic Research (China Review News, May 3; *Taipei Times*, April 19).

Chai Trong-Rong (born 1935): A veteran politician and a previous challenger for the party chairmanship, Chai served as a DPP legislator. During the campaign, Chai said he would implement eight policies, including demanding that jailed former president Chen Shui-bian be pardoned, expanding grassroots party members' involvement in party affairs, leading the DPP to victory in the 2014 "seven-in-one" local elections and increasing the party's level of interaction with the United States (Want China Times, April 13). Chai is one of the DPP activists who spent 30 years in exile as an independence activist in the United States. He also was one of the founders of Formosa TV, the first privately-owned broadcast in Taiwan, and gave up the post of chairman in 2003 under DPP pressure to depoliticize the media.

Hsu Hsin-Liang (born 1941): The former DPP chairman came in last with only 2.49 percent. Early on in the campaign, Hsu pledged his support to Tsai Ing-wen in running for the presidency again in 2016. Given the uncertainty surrounding the impact of a new chairperson on Tsai's campaign platforms, Hsu vowed to include Tsai's election campaign platform in the DPP's official papers. Hsu proposed the party establish a committee to deal with cross-Strait affairs and recommended Frank Hsieh be appointed as its head. Hsu is known for supporting more open China policies that are quite different from the attitude of the party's more pro-independence inclinations (Want China Times, April 14).

The New Chairperson and the Road to 2016

With all the votes tallied, Su Tseng-Chang received a majority of the vote with 50.47 percent, former Tainan county magistrate Su Huan-Chih finished in second place with 21.02 percent, followed by former Vice Premier Wu Rong-I with 14.73 percent, then former LY member Chai Trong-rong with 11.28 percent and, finally, former party chairman Hsu Hsin-liang with 2.49 percent. The voting rate was a record-high turnout of 68.62 percent (*Taipei Times*, May 28).

Su Tseng-Chang (born 1947), along with Chen Shui-bian, Frank Hsieh, Yu Shyi-kun and Annette Lu, were considered the four kings and one queen of the DPP. Su was the only candidate among these party elders in the 2012 race for the chairperson position and probably the only viable candidate among the five in the 2016 presidential election. Su's term as chairman is for two years (May 30, 2012-May 30, 2014). The seven-in-one local elections (mayoral and commissioner elections) to be held at the end of 2014 will be Chairman Su's most important test as a party builder and as a mid-term assessment of his ability to lead the Party into 2016—even if he is no longer chairman. If Su is able to lead the DPP to victory in the local elections, he will have a better chance to get support necessary for a 2016 presidential bid.

In the local media, Su is seen as more pragmatic than other DPP politicians in dealing with China. During the campaign, he said that in light of a changing China, the party should be more flexible, which explained why he wanted to reinstate the China Department in the party national headquarters. Su also said he would not rule out visiting the mainland as party leader if the timing and conditions were right—such as Beijing refraining from setting preconditions (Xinhua, May 30). In spite of widespread speculation about his intention to run in the 2016 presidential election, Su insisted the only thing on his mind right now was to execute his job successfully as party chairperson during the two-year term and to win the 2014 seven-in-one elections that would be essential for laying down the foundation for the DPP's prospects for winning the "big one" in 2016 [2].

Su's platform on China is to insist on Tsai Ing-wen's "Taiwan Consensus," although tactical changes may be forthcoming even as Su and Tsai appear more closely aligned on China policy. Su wants to visit China, because he wishes not only to see communist officials but also Chinese society. Su insists Taiwan can not understand China only through the KMT and vice versa. Therefore, the DPP needs to have a holistic China policy—seemingly including direct contact—so that the electorate can better understand Beijing and its policies. During a lecture on June 9, Tsai warned China may face serious challenges to maintain political stability when economic growth slows down or becomes stagnant. She pointed out Taiwanese people should be more informed about Chinese "public opinion" as expressed in increasing social protests and widespread collective resentments caused by worsening societal inequality and corruption, and stated she supports meaningful exchange with various segments of Chinese society.

To advise him, Su will have two advisory committees on China affairs: Department of China Affairs, a DPP-headquarters body, and the Chinese Affairs Committee, an advisory body including academics and experts as members. Su also plans to restore the DPP Representative Office in the United States to strengthen its relations with Washington. Su pointed out, if financial conditions allow, the DPP would like to set up a DPP representative office in Japan to emphasize future Taiwan-Japan relations.

Another perennial debate among DPP leaders is whether or not the Party should organize an inner Party debate on China policy as Frank Hsieh has advocated. According to Hsieh, DPP members are still divided over the party's China policy and the best way to lay out a roadmap and party policy was a public debate. The priority issue for the DPP, according to Hsieh's statements, is whether the party should engage with China. The last thing the DPP wants is to be excluded from all cross-Strait talks, which is the case at present. "[The exclusion] would make cross-Strait talks the exclusive right of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and could subsequently sacrifice the rights and welfare of people with lower incomes—the core DPP supporters—with the DPP sitting on the sidelines without entering the game." Yet, Su stated there is "no such urgency and [the Party] should not rush either" (*Taipei Times*, June 7).

Yet, for Su, visiting China will not be the focal point at this stage. Instead, Su will take on the strengthening of the party's local organizations as a priority to prepare for the coming 2014 elections. This puts party unity near the top of Su's agenda, and he intends to hold talks with leaders of various party factions. Su does not rule out meeting Ma if circumstances allowed. Ma called to congratulate Su in the evening when the election result was out, and Ma invited Su to talk over the phone. With Tsai and Su both interested in running for the presidency four years from now, the interactions, comparisons and competitions between the two DPP heavyweights are expected to be a hot issue during Su's tenure. Building the party's strength and coherence as a political force could be an important factor in deciding whether Su will be the DPP's candidate and probably will receive more attention than potentially contentious policy debates. How Su balances party unity and setting clear policies will be the deciding factor in the health and relevance of the DPP going forward.

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Notes:

1. Other political figures who did not enter the race but will influence the future direction of the party include the following: 2012 presidential candidate Tsai Ing-Wen (a potential DPP presidential candidate for 2016), former Premier and 2008 DPP presidential candidate Frank Hsieh (who pledged to retire from politics after his 2008 defeat) and former President Lee Teng-Hui.
2. Vice Premier Wu Rong-I and former Tainan County commissioner Su Huan-Chih pledged not to run in 2016 with Hsu publicly endorsing Tsai's second try for the presidency.

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From Strength to Strength: Military Exercises Bolster Sino-Thai Relations

By Ian Storey

In May, as the tense face off between maritime law enforcement vessels from the Philippines and China at Scarborough Shoal entered its second month, several hundred marines from Thailand and China conducted combined military exercises in Guangdong province. The two events highlight the widening fault line within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) between those members who view Chinese assertiveness as a serious national security concern—which can only be addressed with help from the United States—and member states who do not have a direct stake in the dispute and continue to prioritize strengthening economic, political and security ties with Beijing. The Philippines falls on one side of the divide, Thailand on the other. As Sino-Philippine relations deteriorate, Sino-Thai relations move from strength to strength.

Developing Sino-Thai Relations

Thailand and China developed a close relationship in the late 1970s when threat perceptions converged in the wake of Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in 1978. During Hanoi's decade-long occupation, Bangkok and Beijing forged a de facto strategic alliance. China exerted military pressure on Vietnam when the Vietnamese military violated Thai sovereignty and Thailand facilitated the delivery of Chinese weaponry to anti-Vietnamese Khmer Rouge guerrillas along the Thai-Cambodian border. When Vietnam withdrew its forces from Cambodia in the late 1980s, the focus of Sino-Thai cooperation shifted quickly and seamlessly to trade and investment, and Thailand quickly established itself as China's most important economic partner in mainland Southeast Asia.

In the 1990s, bilateral ties continued to flourish and Bangkok was especially grateful to China for its economic support when its economy buckled during the 1997-98 Asian Financial Crisis. Sino-Thai relations were greatly strengthened under Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra from 2001 until his ouster by the military in 2006. In July 2011, elections again brought the Phuea Thai Party to power led by Thaksin's younger sister Yingluck Shinawatra. In the short time that Yingluck has been Prime Minister, Sino-Thai relations have once again experienced another growth spurt.

Trade and investment remains the cornerstone of bilateral relations, and in both areas there has been rapid expansion. Two-way trade more than doubled between 2005 and 2010, from $20.3 billion to $46 billion [1]. In 2011, according to Chinese statistics, the value of two-way trade hit $64.7 billion (*Straits Times*, April 18). China is now Thailand's second largest trade partner while Thailand is China's 14th largest. The two sides have set the goal of expanding annual trade to $100 billion by 2015.

The past several years have also witnessed a surge in investment from China. Despite continuing political instability in Thailand, Chinese investors view Thailand as an important manufacturing and export base in Southeast Asia. Although Japan is still the largest foreign investor, China has quickly moved into the number two position. The value of Chinese investments in the Kingdom increased from Bt 8.14 billion ($2.7 million) in 2010 to Bt 24.84 billion ($788.5 million) in 2011, a jump of more than 200 percent (*Thailand Business News*, September 27, 2011).

During a visit to Thailand by Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping in December 2011, the two countries agreed

to further strengthen bilateral ties. The Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation and Sustainable Development identified four main areas of cooperation: a high speed train system; water management systems; renewable energy sources; and education and human resources development (*Thailand Business News*, December 24, 2011).

The most important of these areas is the transfer of Chinese high-speed railway technology to Thailand. Since 2010, the two countries have been discussing a joint venture high-speed rail network that would eventually link Yunnan province with Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. The Bt 150 billion ($4.8 billion) project envisages a 385-mile line from Nong Khai province in the northeast of the country to Bangkok. Construction is expected to begin in 2012 with completion set for 2016, per a Memorandum of Understanding signed in December 2011 (*Straits Times*, February 18, 2011).

Relations were given a further boost in April when Prime Minister Yingluck paid a three-day official visit to China, during which she met with President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao. The leaders of the two countries pledged to develop a "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership" by increasing security cooperation—especially along the Mekong River where coordinated riverine patrols were launched in December 2011 to tackle trans-boundary crime—promoting bilateral trade and investment, improving cross-border transportation links, developing tourism and cultural ties as well as strengthening cooperation in the fields of agriculture science and technology and water resource management [2]. A 5-year Joint Action Plan on China-Thailand Strategic Cooperation also was concluded during Yingluck's visit and replaced a similar agreement concluded in 2007.

Increased Sino-Thai Defense Cooperation

Among all the countries in Southeast Asia, Thailand has developed the closest military-to-military relationship with China. Indeed, Thailand has achieved a few "firsts" with China in the realm of military cooperation.

In the 1980s, Thailand was the first ASEAN country to receive Chinese-manufactured arms, either cost free or at heavily discounted "friendship prices." In 2001, Thailand became the first ASEAN member to establish annual defense and security talks with China, a mechanism that paved the way for closer military collaboration. In 2005, the Royal Thai Armed Forces (RTAF) became the first Southeast Asian military to conduct combined exercises with the People's Liberation Army (PLA): landmine clearance training followed by naval maneuvers. In 2007, Chinese and Thai Special Forces conducted a 13-day exercise, the first between PLA Special Forces and their foreign counterparts. Two subsequent Sino-Thai Special Forces exercises took place in 2008 and 2010. Finally, in 2010, in another first for the PLA, Thai and Chinese marines participated in a combined exercise in the Gulf of Thailand.

Under Prime Minister Yingluck, bilateral defense cooperation is being stepped up. A few weeks after the Prime Minister's visit to Beijing, Defense Minister Sukumpol Suwanatat (a former air force general) was in China accompanied by the ministry's permanent secretary, the supreme commander of the RTAF, and all three service chiefs—the highest ranking Thai defense delegation to visit China in 15 years.

During Sukumpol's visit, agreement was reached to jointly develop the DTI-1G multiple rocket launcher in a three-year project costing Bt 1.5 billion ($4.7 million) (*Bangkok Post*, April 28). Thailand and China have been discussing defense industry cooperation since 2007, but the rocket launcher deal is the first formal agreement in this area between the two countries.

The issue of Chinese submarines for the Royal Thai Navy (RTN) also resurfaced during the Thai delegation's visit. The RTN has been keen to acquire a submarine capability since the late 1990s, but successive Thai governments have always rejected the idea on the grounds of cost. The RTN's case however has been strengthened in recent years due to the submarine acquisition programs of neighboring countries including Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and Indonesia. In 2008, China reportedly offered the RTN two Type 039 Song-class attack submarines. Based on this author's recent discussions, RTN officers inspected the Song-class vessels soon after the offer was made but ultimately rejected it because of the high cost of modernizing the vessels and training the crews. Thailand examined other options and in 2011 decided to acquire six second-hand German submarines. In

February, however, the German deal fell through, again due to concerns over costs.

In China, Defense Minister Sukumpol suggested RTN personnel might undergo training at the Qingdao Submarine Academy (*Bangkok Post*, April 30). Thai sailors, however, would need to undergo Chinese language instruction first, and their participation in the course would only be useful if Thailand decided to acquire Chinese submarines. According to the author's discussions, it is highly unlikely that Bangkok will opt for Chinese submarines due to quality and price concerns. Bangkok's options nevertheless are limited and China might be able to give Thailand an offer it cannot refuse in order to strengthen military-to-military relations. Chinese Defense Minister General Liang Guanglie told his Thai counterpart that China was willing to sell Thailand military equipment at "friendship prices" (*Bangkok Post*, April 28).

As far as future Sino-Thai military cooperation is concerned, the two sides have agreed to another "first": a combined exercise involving aircraft from the Royal Thai Air Force and PLA Air Force (*Bangkok Post*, April 28). The visit of the Thai delegation was followed by a second combined exercise between Chinese and Thai marines in Guangdong, codenamed "Blue Commando-2012". The exercise—which focused on anti-terrorism training and not on amphibious operations—took place over May 9-29 and involved 372 Chinese and 126 Thai marines (*China Daily*, May 11).

Thailand and the South China Sea Dispute

One reason why Sino-Thai relations have developed so smoothly since the end of the Cold War is the absence of contentious security problems. Most importantly, Thailand and China do not have overlapping territorial or maritime boundary claims in the South China Sea. Over the past two decades, Bangkok has neither criticized China's actions in the South China Sea nor offered support to the Philippines and Vietnam during times of heightened tensions with China. Thailand's strategy has been to avoid offending either China or its fellow ASEAN members by taking a strong position on the dispute.

It came as something of a surprise, therefore, when Prime Minister Yingluck mentioned the dispute during her visit to China. According to the Chinese media, Yingluck had said "Regarding the disputes in the South China Sea, Thailand understands China's concerns over the issue" (*China Daily*, April 19). Although she did not elaborate, the Prime Minister's comments seemed to indicate a degree of sympathy with China at a time when a war of words had erupted between Manila and Beijing over ownership of Scarborough Shoal ("ASEAN and the South China Sea: Movement in Lieu of Progress," *China Brief*, April 27). Her comments could not have been well received by the governments of the Philippines and Vietnam, both of which have been highly critical of China's behavior in the South China Sea over the past several years.

Yingluck's comment provides further evidence of the growing rift within ASEAN between members that have significant economic and strategic interests in the South China Sea (the four ASEAN claimants Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam, plus non-claimants Indonesia and Singapore) and those that do not (Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand). Over the past two decades the countries in this latter group have also developed close political and economic ties with China, and do not wish to damage those ties by taking positions on the South China Sea inimical to Beijing's interests. This growing division within ASEAN has resulted in weak consensus and inaction over the South China Sea ("ASEAN and the South China Sea," *China Brief*, April 27).

Bending with the Wind?

Thai statecraft has often been characterized as "bending with the wind", i.e. that over the past two centuries Thailand has been able to preserve its political autonomy and sovereignty by aligning with the dominant power in Asia.

Thailand has been a treaty ally of the United States since 1954, and the RTAF has operated alongside its U.S. counterparts in a number of conflicts, including Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq. While U.S. and Thai armed forces continue to conduct regular exercises—including the world's largest annual field exercises, Cobra Gold—the alliance has, as one recent report concluded, "stagnated" [3]. Politically U.S.-Thai relations also have drifted and, economically, the relationship is not as important to Thailand as it once was. Although the United States is still a major investor in the Kingdom, Thailand's trade with

China far outweighs the value of U.S.-Thai commerce, which stood at $35 billion in 2011. As the Washington "pivots" or "rebalances" toward Asia, strengthening U.S.-Thai relations needs to be a priority if Washington is to counter the increasingly close political, economic and security relationship between Bangkok and Beijing.

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Notes:

1. *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook* (Washington D.C.: International Monetary Fund, 2011)
2. Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Kingdom of Thailand on Establishing a Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership, April 19, 2012. For information on Mekong River security cooperation, see "Mekong River Patrols in Full Swing but Challenges Remain,"*China Brief*, February 21, 2012.
3. Catharin E. Dalpino, *An Old Alliance for the New Century: Reinvigorating the US-Thailand Alliance,* NBR Special Report #40 (June 2012), p. 4.

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China's Air Force Female Aviators: Sixty Years of Excellence (1952-2012)

By Kenneth Allen and Emma Kelly

In March 2012, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force celebrated the 60th anniversary of female aviators (*feixing renyuan*) joining the first operational unit, thus making China one of 16 countries with female air force pilots today (*China Air Force*, 2012-3). Although their numbers have been small, they are playing an ever more important role as the selection of China's first female astronaut this month for its first (and successful) manned space docking mission shows (Xinhua, June 18). Of the 543 who began training in 1951, the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) has graduated eight groups of female aviators, consisting of 328 pilots (*feixingyuan*), navigators (*linghangyuan*), communicators (*tongxinyuan*), and maintenance (*jixieyuan*) crew (*China Daily*, March 8).

Since the early 1980s, the PLAAF has averaged a new group of about 30-35 cadets every three years. Each class is divided out into functional groups. For example, China's first female astronaut was selected in 2010 from the 7th Group (Xinhua, June 18; March 3, 2011). The 8th Group has become the first combat/fighter pilots. The 9th Group is currently in training, and the 10th Group should have begun its training in 2011, though this apparently has not yet occurred (*China Daily*, March 8).

Historically, female aviators have been separated from their male counterparts throughout their cadet education and training, as well as at in their operational units. The majority of them have been assigned to all-female crews in a single flight group subordinate to the Guangzhou Military Region Air Force's (MRAF's) 13th Air Division's 38th Regiment, where they conduct charter flights, disaster relief, and research-oriented trial flights, as well as reforestation and cloud seeding. In 2005, four crews conducted their first drop of several hundred airborne troops (*Air Force News*, May 7, 2005), However, this pattern has been slowly changing since 2000 based on a wide-ranging review of reliable Chinese internet sources. A few pilots have been assigned to mixed IL-76 crews (*China Air Force*, 2005-2, 35), one became the first to receive a master's degree in 2000, one became a PLAAF Command College deputy commandant in 2002, one received her first star (major general) as a Guangzhou MRAF deputy chief of staff in 2003, one became the first female flight group commander in 2005 while still another became a regiment deputy political commissar in 1998 and then commander of the 4th Transport Air Division in Sichuan in 2009 (China National Radio, August 24, 2009).

This article provides a brief background about each of the nine groups and discusses their recruitment, education, flight training, and operational assignments. It also provides a comparison of PLAAF and U.S. Air Force (USAF) female pilot accomplishments.

Table 1: Nine Groups of PLAAF Female Aviators

Group	Years	Comments
1st	1951-1952	Total of 55 crew, including 14 pilots, 5 navigators, 6 communicators, and 30 on-board mechanics. Upon graduation in March 1952, they flew 6 Li-2s over Tiananmen and received praise from Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai.
2nd	1956-1958	160 started, 44 finished including 21 pilots. First civilian airlines pilot came from this class in 1986.
3rd	1965-1967	First Y-8 pilot.
4th	1969-1973	No information.
5th	1981- 1984	First group to receive a 3-year associates degree. 50 females graduated.
6th	1989-1993	First group to receive a bachelor's degree and first female to receive a master's degree.
7th	1997-2001	First astronaut selectees
8th	2005-2009	16 out of 35 graduated. First to become combat aircraft pilots.
9th	2008-2012	33 started. First "4+1" double-bachelor's degree class.

Table 2: Comparison of PLAAF-USAF Female Aviator "Firsts"

Female Aviator Firsts	PLAAF	USAF
Transport unit pilot	1952	1977
Bachelor's degree [3]	1993	N/A
Master's degree	2000	1981
Doctorate degree	None	1983
Unit commander	2004	2004
1-star flag officer	2003	2000
Astronaut	2012	1984
Demonstration team member	None (Bayi)	1995 (Thunderbirds)
Fighter pilot	2010	1994
Bomber pilot	None	1995
Combat mission	None	2011

The Nine Groups

Table 1 provides an overview of the nine groups, including their group number, the years they were cadets and unique aspects of each group.

PLAAF-USAF Comparison

The responsibilities of both PLAAF and USAF female aviators have expanded in recent years. Though Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) flew during WWII, they were not active-duty personnel. It was not until 1977 that the first active-duty USAF females graduated from Undergraduate Pilot Training. While USAF female aviators have steadily increased their education, combat, and command credentials since the 1980s, PLAAF female aviators did not begin increasing theirs until the 2000s [1]. Table 2 provides a comparison of the dates for important "firsts" for PLAAF and USAF female aviators [2].

Recruitment

The PLAAF recruits both male and female aviator cadets the same way from thousands of high school graduate and college student applicants ("PLA Air Force Male Aviation Cadet Recruitment, Education and Training," *China Brief*, March 2). Whereas all previous graduates flew transports, the 8th Group was recruited to fly combat/fighter aircraft (*zhandouji/jianjiji*), and the 9th Group was recruited to fly transports, tankers, early warning, and reconnaissance aircraft (Guangxi News, September 15, 2009; Xinhua, February 19, 2008). The following bullets provide combined information for these two groups (Sina.com, March 17, 2010; China News Service, April 1, 2008; Xinhua, February 19, 2008; *Wuhan Morning News*, November 1, 2005):

- Age: 16-19
- Height: 5'3" to 6'0"
- Weight: Minimum 100 lbs
- Provinces/Municipalities: 12-16
- Minorities: Yes
- Pass 116 tests, including political, physical, academic, and psychological

Cadets from the 8th Group were divided into two categories based on their scores and received a 3,000 RMB ($500) or 5,000 RMB ($800) bonus (*China Air Force*, 2005-5).

Cadet Education and Training

Historically, female aviators have received their basic education in Changchun (the Air Force Aviation University since 2004) and their basic (CJ-7) and advanced (Y-7) flight training in the 1st Flight College (Harbin) or 2nd Flight College (Huxian and Jiajiang). The 8th Group, however, received its basic (CJ-6) flight training in Harbin and advanced (K-8) flight training at the 3rd Flight College (Jinzhou). Female and male cadets remain separated throughout their education and training.

Today, female cadets receive what is called "2.5+1.5" education and training, where basic education lasts for 30 months at the Aviation University, followed by six months of basic flight training and 12 months of advanced trainer training. Basic education consists of military, political, cultural, physical, psychological topics, as well as parachute jumps from a Y-5 at 800 meters and seven days of survival and field training (*Air Force News*, August 6, 2009; *China Air Force*, 2008-3, p. 20-23).

Basic flight training for the 8th Group started with 50 days of six ground-based training subjects at the 1st Flight College, including cockpit familiarization and simulator training. They then flew their first solo flights, which lasted for 90 minutes and consisted of six sorties with four turns each at altitudes ranging from 400-1,600 meters. Altogether, they averaged 83 hours of flight time, according to post on an air force discussion board in February 2008.

The 8th Group then moved to the 3rd Flight College to complete 12 months of flying in an advanced trainer. The training consisted of cockpit familiarization, solo flights, and dealing with special situations, such as engine failure, instrument failure, bird strikes, and changing weather conditions. Their techniques and skills training included horizontal rolls, diving, somersaults, half somersaults with a roll over, high altitude flying, and night flying. Altogether, they averaged 135 hours of flight time. They were not allowed to fly more than five hours in one day, but they did fly for four hours and 58 minutes (*Air Force News*, August 11, 2009). The 8th Group's 218 hours compares to 77 hours for the 1st Group (*Air Force News*, November 5, 2009).

Based on a review of the numbers available, it appears that the washout rate has been about 50 percent per group; however, those who do not complete their training are sent to another PLAAF college to receive a degree in a different specialty (China News Service, April 1, 2008).

Starting with the 6th Group in 1993, graduates receive a Bachelor's in Military Science with the rank of 1st Lieutenant, the grade of company deputy leader and 3rd grade pilot status (Sina.com, March 17, 2010).

Post-Graduation

Graduates in the 1st to 7th Groups were assigned directly to an operational unit, where they transitioned into that unit's transport aircraft and remained there for the rest of their career. Other than a few individual cases, no information was found about post-graduate professional military education (PME).

As of 2005, female aviators had flown in eight aircraft variants, including the Li-2, Y-5, Y-7, Trident and Il-76, and had flown 1.1 million hours (*Air Force News*, March 22, 2005). The 38th Regiment's 3rd Flight Group has about 60 pilots, of whom one-half are women (*Air Force News*, February 24, 2003). Until the early-2000s, women had not held leadership positions. In 2003, one pilot received her first star as a deputy chief of staff in the Guangzhou MRAF Headquarters. It was not until 2004 that the first female became the 38th Group commander (*China Air Force*, 2011-03, p 48-50). In 2009, another female became the first commander of the 4th Transport Air Division in Sichuan, which was created in 2004. She had earlier served as a deputy chief of staff in the 13th Air Division and as a deputy political commissar in the 38th Regiment [4].

Although one member of the 4th Group became the first female civilian airline pilot in 1986, this was rare (Press.idoican.com.cn, September 24, 2009). In 2010, China's civil airlines created its own flight school to train female helicopter pilots (Educhn.net, March 23, 2010).

Concerning family life, members of the 1st Group were not allowed to get married for ten years (21st Century Herald, October 26, 2006). Today, most of the female aviators are married to other pilots and support personnel in the 13th Air Division (*Air Force News*, February 26, 2004). In one case, the husband was transferred to the 34th Transport Division in Beijing, so they had been separated for eight years (*Air Force News*, April 22, 2003). In 1993, a member of the 2nd and 6th Groups became the first mother-daughter aviators [5]. The first female pilots selected for astronaut training had to be married and already have a child (*China Space News*, December 28, 2009).

Hours Flown

Although the PLAAF has not provided figures for the hours its female pilots have flown, a compilation of available published data indicates that they average about 100 to 225 hours per year. The highest number noted is 6,100 hours for Major General Yue Xicai, who was a member of the 3rd Group and is currently a deputy chief of staff of the Guangzhou MRAF (Her biography is available on the Hudong wiki website).

The 8th Group

The 8th Group (2005-2009) has become the PLAAF's rock stars (*Air Force News*, March 21, 2011; September 1, 2009; *China Air Force*, 2010-3; Xinhua, February 19, 2008; October 15, 2005). Of the 35 cadets selected out of 200,000 applicants from 12 provinces and municipalities, 16 graduated, including one Hui minority from Nanjing. The remaining 19 received degrees at other PLAAF colleges. This group was the first to be identified as "combat aircraft" and "fighter" pilots, who would fly tankers, airborne early warning (AEW) aircraft, and reconnaissance aircraft (China News Service, September 15, 2009).

Their "2.5+1.5" cadet education and training included 30 months of basic education at the Aviation University, followed by six months of basic trainer flying at the 1st Flight College. They then became the first group to receive 12 months of advanced trainer flying in a K-8 "combat aircraft" at the 3rd Flight College. Upon graduation, they deployed to Tangshan, where they flew 55 hours in 120 days before flying in three 5-ship formations over Tiananmen to celebrate China's 60th Anniversary.

After the ceremony, they saw their families for the first time in three years, visited a spa, performed on stage, toured China's Space City, modeled new flight suits, and

had multiple interviews on TV. In March 2011, four were assigned to the 2nd Flight College for one year of training in Z-9 helicopters, where they were scheduled to each fly an average of 100 hours and 581 sorties. According to a CCTV report, six members were assigned to the Beijing MRAF, where they completed their J-7 transition training in late 2011 and are currently transitioning to J-10s. One photo shows a J-11, which implies some may be transitioning to that aircraft as well (Feiyang Junshi, March 16). Official military press stated this spring another six members assigned to a Nanjing MRAF unit completed their transition training to a two-seat JH-7 fighter bomber (*PLA Daily*, March 6).

The 9th Group

Thirty-three cadets were selected from 16 provinces and municipalities out of 150,000 applicants for the 9th Group that began their education and training in August 2008 as part of a new "4+1" program. They have already completed two years of basic education and one year of aviation theory at the Aviation University. In February 2011, some members of the 9th group were transferred to the 2nd Flight College's 2nd Training Regiment near Xian to receive transport aircraft navigation and communications training on simulators (*Air Force News*, March 2, 2011). Additionally in February 2012, 22 cadets began receiving their basic trainer flying at the Aviation College's Flight Training Base (*China Air Force*, 2012-3). This will be followed by one year of advanced trainer training, probably at the 1st Flight College in Harbin. Upon graduation, they will receive a Bachelor's in Engineering and a Bachelor's in Military Science and are scheduled to fly transports, tankers, AEW and reconnaissance aircraft (Sohu.com, March 21; Press.idoican.com.cn, September 24, 2009; Xinhua, February 19, 2008).

The 10th Group?

In December 2010, the media reported that the PLAAF was preparing to recruit cadets from 10 provinces for the 10th Group to begin in mid-2011; however, it appears the recruiting was stopped and no new group was selected for 2011 or 2012. It is not clear why.

Conclusions

As with the USAF, the PLAAF's female aviators and support personnel are becoming more integrated into the PLA's overall combat plans, missions and campaigns. Although the percentage of female aviators is still quite small, they have begun to assume increasingly more important combat missions. They have begun flying fighters, attack aircraft and helicopters as well as flying combat-support missions—including transporting airborne troops and possibly eventually flying on AEW and tanker aircraft. In addition, they are now becoming unit commanders, senior staff officers in various headquarters and astronauts. Should China go to war, the PLAAF's female aviators, along with all other female combat and support personnel, will be actively involved and play a much greater role than in the past.

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Notes:

1. Hill Air Force Base Fact Sheet, March 12, 2008 http://www.hill.af.mil/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=5829.
2. Information on USAF pilots comes from Correspondence with USAF Historical Studies Office and USAFA Institutional Research, and http://www.kirtland.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123296164.
3. USAF women who began flight training in 1976 already had a BA from a civilian university. The first USAF Academy female cadets graduated in 1980. The PLAAF did not begin granting bachelor's degrees to non-aviation cadets until

1982 and to male aviation cadets in 1987.

4. In addition to the biographical information used here, the following website is the official international Women's Day 2010 website for the PLA and contains a great deal of additional information on women in the PLA, http://chn.chinamil.com.cn/zt/2010jzjg/node_42768.htm.
5. "Chinese Female Pilots" (*zhongguo nüfei xingyuan*) entry on Hudong Baike, a Chinese wiki website, http://www.hudong.com/wiki/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E5%A5%B3%E9%A3%9E%E8%A1%8C%E5%91%98.

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